

## Militants warn of 'volcano of anger' if Arafat is expelled

AFP, Nablus

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat remained defiant yesterday after Israel decided to expel him, with militants warning all Israelis of a "volcano of anger" if the threat is carried out.

"Touching Yasser Arafat and his aides would see the unstoppable volcano of Palestinian anger erupt," warned the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Arafat's Fatah faction.

"We tell the criminal (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon: your people will pay dearly because a wave of martyrs will blow up every one living in Israel," it added in a statement.

The Israeli security cabinet approved in principle to "remove" what it called the obstacle of Arafat, at emergency talks late Thursday in response to two suicide bombings earlier in the week which left 15 Israelis dead.

The announcement sparked a spontaneous outpouring of support for the 74-year-old leader as thousands of Palestinians took to the streets of the West Bank and Gaza

Strip, and Arafat vowed he would never be taken alive.

"No one can kick me out. They can kill me with bombs but I will not leave," said Arafat, who made a triumphant return to the Palestinian territories in 1994 on the strength of the Oslo peace accords the year before.

Hundreds of gunmen opened fire into the air in Gaza City, shouting "Sharon go to hell", "Abu Ammar we will defend you forever" and "Revenge, Revenge".

Israel's decision was also condemned by key global players, with the United States, France and Russia, three backers of the Middle East peace "roadmap", speaking out firmly against any move to expel Arafat.

A senior US administration official said Washington will not work with Arafat, but opposed expelling him because that would only give him "a wider international stage."

"Our position on this is well known, longstanding and unchanged," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "It is unhelpful and it is not the solution."

UN Secretary General Kofi

Annun said it would be unwise to expel the veteran Palestinian leader, while the European Union said it would be a huge mistake.

"We believe that would be a terrible mistake that would have serious consequences across the whole region," said Diego Ojeda, a spokesman for EU external relations commissioner Chris Patten.

The Arab League also said expelling Arafat would be disastrous, and there were numerous calls around the region for countries to intervene to prevent his removal.

Arafat himself was standing firm in his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah where he has been holed in for 20 months.

Israeli officials quoted by military radio said Arafat's immediate expulsion was not on the cards, as they were awaiting the green light from Washington.

Amid fears Israel's decision could spark a dangerous escalation in the cycle of violence across the region, US Ambassador Dan Kurtzer met Friday with Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz.

Mofaz is due to visit Washington next week for high-level talks,

defence ministry officials said.

Israel, which has staged a series of air strikes against Hamas in Gaza recently, has accused Arafat of giving approval to militant attacks in the three-year Palestinian intifada. More than 3,450 people have died in that time, mainly Palestinians.

Palestinian prime minister-designate Ahmed Qorei threatened to call off efforts to form a new government after the Israeli decision, saying the move would make the composition of a government an "issue without substance".

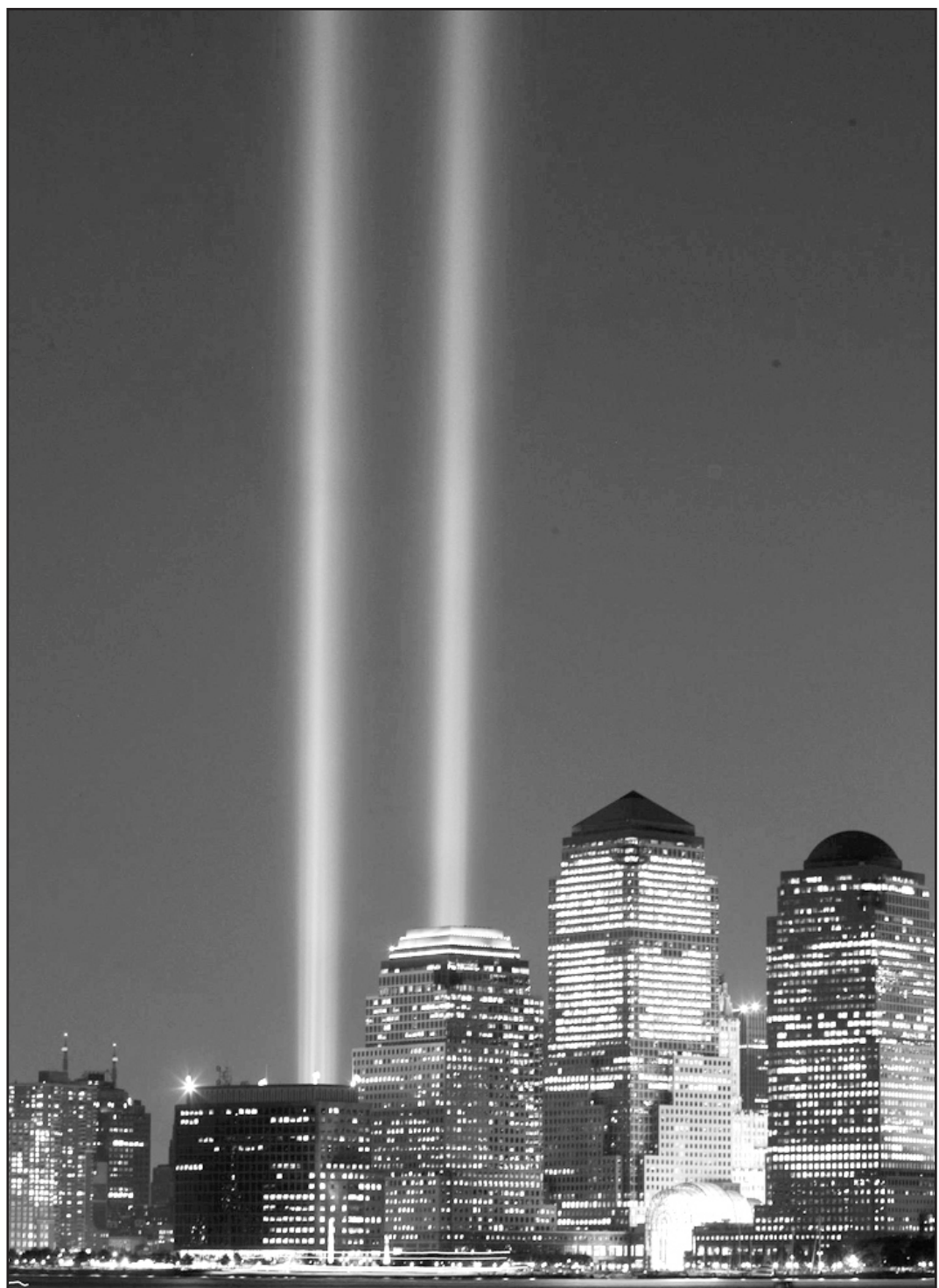
Qorei agreed to accept a nomination from Arafat to become prime minister on Wednesday. Plans for him to be installed along with his new cabinet on Thursday were postponed after disagreements over its make-up.

A public opinion poll by the independent Dahaf Institute published Friday said that more than one in three Israelis wanted to see Arafat killed.

When asked "what should be done with Arafat," 37 percent replied that he should be "liquidated." Another 23 percent opted for expelling Arafat from the Palestinian territories.



This handout picture released by the Palestinian Authority Press Office (PPO) shows Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat talking to supporters outside his office in the West Bank City of Ramallah late Thursday. Arafat was hailed by thousands of supporters as he ventured out of his headquarters after the Israeli government had given the green light to his expulsion. "No one can kick me out," 74-year-old Arafat told reporters at his Ramallah headquarters where he has been confined by the Israeli army for the last 20 months.



Two columns of light symbolise the fallen World Trade Center towers in a tribute in light as seen from New Jersey Thursday in New York City. The light tribute that debuted last year returned to mark the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Centre.

## UN must help rebuild Iraq: Bush France will help, but not militarily: Chirac

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush said Thursday that UN members, even those that opposed the Iraq war, are obliged to help rebuild Iraq, while French President Jacques Chirac said his country would help, but not militarily.

"A free Iraq will be in their nations' benefit. It will make the world more peaceful and more secure," Bush told reporters as he wrapped up a two-year commemoration of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Bush said Secretary of State Colin Powell would embark on a weekend European trip to promote a new, US-backed UN resolution aimed at winning more global support for Iraq reconstruction.

Powell was to meet in Geneva on Saturday with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the foreign ministers of France, Britain, China and Russia, who, with the United States, make up the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

"The key thing for the United Nations resolution is that it will hopefully encourage other nations to participate. And I think other nations have an obligation to participate," said the president.

Chirac made his remarks as he

met with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar in Spain in an attempt to bridge differences over the war, which had split their two countries and the rest of Europe.

"Today we are a long way from being in a situation where France could participate militarily in Iraq," Chirac said.

Aznar said clear initiatives were now required to guarantee "security and stability in Iraq."

"There is no point going on about the past. Our positions are well known," said Aznar. The international community must "push for a wider consensus," he said.

Anti-US violence meanwhile escalated in Iraq, with a 90-minute firefight west of the flashpoint town of Fallujah.

Several US troops were wounded after a convoy broke down. At least three other soldiers were hurt elsewhere in the latest upsurge of resistance.

Sixty-eight US soldiers have been killed in attacks blamed on forces loyal to ousted president Saddam Hussein since Bush declared the end of major combat operations on May 1. Another 80 have died in accidents or non-combat incidents.

"This is all about September 11 and there are a lot of terrorists in this country and we're making it difficult

for them and in the long run. This will make a difference," Specialist Jerry Dillon said at Baghdad Airport.

But other soldiers at a dawn memorial service organized by the 8,000 members of the 1st Armored Division were not convinced they were doing much good since Saddam's ouster in April.

"Right now I'd like to be home," said Sergeant Brian Sparks, standing guard outside the airport gates. "These people are not terrorists, so where's the significance about being here?"

Gunfire resounded for more than an hour in the town of Khaldiayah, 30 km west of Fallujah, after masked gunmen attacked the stalled US convoy with rockets.

There were reports of injuries but the US military said it had no immediate confirmation of the incident near Fallujah, a Sunni Muslim bastion 50 km west of Baghdad.

Three US soldiers were wounded in attacks in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and near Fallujah.

Two were hurt when two rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) slammed into a hotel in Mosul, and the third was wounded as his military vehicle drove over an explosive device on the highway linking Baghdad and Fallujah.

China has been "quite restrictive" in stopping the flow of major

## UN set to end Libya sanctions

REUTERS, United Nations

Fifteen years after the bombing of Pan Am 103, the UN Security Council is set on Friday to lift UN sanctions against Libya, triggering the release of \$2.7 billion to the families of the 270 people killed in the attack.

Council approval of a resolution lifting the sanctions slapped on Libya over the 1988 midair attack over Lockerbie, Scotland, was assured after France announced on Thursday it was withdrawing a threat to veto the measure.

Paris dropped the threat after relatives of the victims of a separate 1989 bombing of a French airliner won the promise of additional compensation from Tripoli.

The United States and Britain first called for adoption of the resolution last month, after Libya accepted blame for the Lockerbie bombing, renounced terrorism and agreed to put \$2.7 billion into a special account for compensating the victims, capping 15 years of international pressure and negotiations.

## India won't send troops to Iraq even with UN mandate

AFP, New Delhi

India will not send troops to Iraq even if the United Nations mandates multinational peacekeeping operations in the strife-torn country, the Indian media reported yesterday.

Quoting top government sources, newspapers said the line New Delhi is now pushing is that it cannot spare any of its million-strong army for peacekeeping operations due to security threats within the country and on its borders.

However, the real reason, the reports said, was that national elections are due in India by October 2004 and the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believes it would be politically disastrous if any Indian soldier died in Iraq.

## Indian SC asks Gujarat govt to render justice or quit

ians, new delhi

In a attack on the Gujarat Government for filing an "eye wash" of an appeal in the Best Bakery riot case, the Supreme Court on Friday doubted the state's intentions on punishing the guilty and observed that it should quit if it cannot punish the rioters.

Flaring up after perusing the grounds of appeal filed in the high court challenging acquittal of all the accused in the case, a Bench of Chief Justice VN Khare, Justice Brijesh Kumar and Justice SB Sinha questioned the "raj dharma" of the Narendra Modi Government.

"I have no faith left in the prosecution and the Gujarat Government. I am not saying Article 356. You have to protect people and punish the guilty. What else is raj dharma? You quit if you cannot prosecute the guilty," an anguished Chief Justice said.

The Bench then summoned the

Chief Secretary of the State and the Director General of Police and directed them to be personally present before the court on September 19 to answer as to "who has drafted such an appeal" to be filed before the court.

Additional Solicitor General Mukul Rohatgi appearing for the State Government said that it was not an earlier system in which the Chief Ministers depended on the mercy of others. "He is elected democratically".

The Chief Justice shot back saying "democracy does not mean you will not prosecute anyone."

The Gujarat Government counsel said that there were some shortcomings in the criminal justice system and added that in the last 40 years of riots in the country not many rioters have been brought to book.

He cited the example of 1984 anti-sikh riots cases and said that

not a single person had been found guilty so far.

This angered the court even more as it questioned the State Government saying "Are you saying that the rioters in Gujarat should also be acquitted. What else are you saying?"

The court was hearing an appeal filed by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which has sought transfer of Best Bakery, Godhra carnage and two other riot-related cases outside the State.

Appearing for NHRC, senior advocate PP Rao read out the grounds of appeal filed by the State Government in the high court in the Best Bakery case and said despite the trial court indicting the manner in which wrong evidence was collected by prosecution and wrong accused were roped in, the State has not sought retrial of the case.

## Allies line up with US to set Iran nuke deadline

REUTERS, Vienna

The United States has gathered more than two dozen allies to force the UN nuclear watchdog to set an Oct. 31 deadline for Iran yesterday to demonstrate it is not secretly developing nuclear weapons, diplomats said.

The 35-nation Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to vote at its closed-door board session on a toughly worded draft resolution which gives Iran a last chance to prove it has been complying with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The United States says Tehran has violated the treaty in its effort to develop atomic weapons secretly.

Iran, which denies the allegation, could face economic sanctions if reported to the UN Security Council for breach of its NPT obligations.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi backed off from a previous threat to "review" cooperation with the IAEA if it passed the US-backed resolution, but said the board should not politicize the issue.

"America and some European countries are trying to drive the (board's) decision toward political aims," he told the IRNA news agency. "Iran desires cooperation with the IAEA and to enable this agency to make a decision based on realities."

Washington had originally lobbied for the board to report Iran to the council this week, but backed off

when it saw the majority of board members wanted to give Iran one last chance and a deadline to prove it had been complying with the NPT.

Several diplomats said days of behind-the-scenes negotiations, led by France and Germany -- Washington's opponents in its failed attempt to force the UN Security Council to back the Iraq war -- brought nearly 30 nations behind an ultimatum for Iran to come clean about its nuclear plans.

Tehran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Akbar Salehi, told reporters repeatedly on the sidelines of the week-long board session that his country would not accept any deadlines.

"You can't impose deadlines on a sovereign country," he said.

## N Korea halts work at nuclear facility

REUTERS, Washington

North Korea appears to have halted work at its Yongbyon nuclear complex, center of efforts to produce plutonium for atomic weapons, US officials said on Thursday.

The officials said they did not know the reason, but told Reuters possibilities include: Pyongyang has done this as a gesture to encourage negotiations with Washington; run into technical difficulties, or, more ominously, finished reprocessing fuel needed for a half dozen or more nuclear bombs.

"There's not much going on," one US official said when asked about current activity at Yongbyon.

Another said: "I sense there may be a pause in the action but would be nervous about concluding that for certain."

Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly disclosed that Washington remains concerned that China, despite hosting six-party talks aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis, continues to abet Pyongyang's weapons programs.

China has been "quite restrictive" in stopping the flow of major

technologies to the North but "there is some leakage around the edges," requiring Kelly to raise the issue with Beijing in the last two weeks, he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "I know that there have been examples in which China blocked shipments but... there are many North Korean companies and front companies operating around in China," Kelly said.

He gave no details but experts said China has aided the missile program of North Korea, among other countries, with dual use items and raw materials that are hard to control.

On reports of Yongbyon inactivity, Kelly would only answer questions in a closed session. The subject was dropped.

If Yongbyon operations have been deliberately halted to facilitate six-party negotiations, the effect may be offset by an ominous new development. US officials told Reuters on Wednesday the North used Russian technology to produce a new intermediate range ballistic missile that may be the most accurate and capable in Pyongyang's inventory.



Madira Thapa (L), the wife of Rameshore Shrestha who was gun down by Maoists, is comforted by an unidentified family member in Kathmandu yesterday. Nepal's Maoist rebels shot dead two people and set off a powerful bomb in the latest violence which has swept the country since a ceasefire broke down two weeks ago.

## Blair under pressure for ignoring warnings

AFP, London

Prime Minister Tony Blair came under pressure yesterday to explain why he ignored warnings from British intelligence that a war on Iraq would make it easier for terrorists to get hold of weapons of mass destruction.

The revelation came out of a 57-page report by the Intelligence and Security Committee, a cross-party parliamentary panel that oversees the work of Britain's three main intelligence agencies.

It said an assessment last February by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which brings together British intelligence chiefs, concluded there was no evidence that Iraq had funneled chemical or biological weapons to al-Qaeda.

But it added: "The JIC assessed that al-Qaeda and associated groups continued to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests, and that threat would be heightened by military action against Iraq."

## US marine gets 42-month prison term for rape in Okinawa

AFP, Tokyo

A Japanese court yesterday sentenced a 21-year-old US marine to three years and six months in prison for beating and raping a woman on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa in May.

The verdict was handed down to Lance Corporal Jose Torres, who was charged with rape resulting in injury, at the Naha District Court on Okinawa.

The maximum sentence for the charge is life imprisonment, while the minimum sentence is three years.

Judge Nobuyuki Yokota called the circumstances of the crime "vicious".

"The feelings of the family and victim in demanding a severe punishment are natural, and I cannot ignore the anxiety caused to the neighbors and general citizens," he said.

## Donors pledge \$4.5b to rebuild Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

International aid donors pledged to spend more than 4.5 billion dollars to rebuild Sri Lanka despite setbacks in the island's fragile peace process, a top Japanese envoy said here yesterday.

Special envoy Yasushi Akashi said they were disappointed that Tamil Tiger rebels had boycotted Friday's crucial aid meeting, but were "cautiously optimistic" that the island could eventually have durable peace.

"We are disappointed," Akashi said of the decision by the Tamil Tigers to stay away from the meeting attended by 12 donor countries and seven international financial institutions and aid agencies.

However, Akashi said there would be no scaling down of the 4.5 billion dollars the international community promised at an aid pledging conference in Tokyo three months ago.